Title

[0001] An Improved Culinary Tool for Transporting Food Stuff

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

[0002] The present application relates to and claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/428,179 filed November 21, 2002.

Background of the Invention

[0003] The present invention generally relates to the field of manipulating and transporting food objects for purposes of food preparation and cooking.

[0004] Food preparation and cooking generally requires transport of food objects from an area where the food objects are manipulated and processed to the cooking utensil in which the food is prepared. An example of this is moving diced-up meat from a cutting board to a pan where the meat will cook. In commercial settings, a large amount of food objects are transported and often in larger bulk. It is desirable to transport the food objects in a quick and convenient manner without spilling and therefore wasting food objects. It is also desirable to move the food objects with limited, actual contact between the food objects and the person. This prevents undesirable transfer of bacteria and other forms of unwanted contamination from the food objects to the person and vice a versa.

[0005] Current devices utilized for the transport of food often includes existing kitchen utensils. It is common to see a cook utilize a knife to transport food objects to a cooking pot or pan. This is an inefficient device for transport because there is the risk of cutting oneself or another with the knife. Also, the knife is not equipped with features that prevent food objects from falling, therefore spillage often occurs. Scoops such as grain scoops are known and used to scoop bulk, dry materials such as dry grains from one area to another. The problem with these scoops is they are not made for efficient use in the kitchen because they are rather bulky, having a long and sturdy handle, and are designed to penetrate into bulk, dry material and transport a

scoop-sized quantity. These scoops are not designed to scrape up food objects off a flat surface in an efficient manner.

[0006] A food scoop is disclosed in the design patent US Pat. No. D394,371 (Cousins), but the design is limited by the small surface area of the base portion and has no features to prevent food spillage. Scooping food objects, particularly smaller food objects, with this disclosed design will likely lead to regular spillage of food objects, especially in the frantic pace that usually occurs in a commercial kitchen let alone a personal kitchen.

[0007] There still remains a need for a useful and efficient scoop for transporting food objects in a kitchen.

Summary of the Invention

[0008] The present invention addresses the above-mentioned needs in the art and, more specifically, includes devices that can be utilized for transporting food objects efficiently with limited spillage and good maneuverability around a kitchen area. The disclosed device is easy to maneuver in a kitchen because there is a lack of protruding parts that would make the device cumbersome to operate.

[0009] An aspect of the present invention is a food transporting device comprising a flat base, a rounded grip terminating an end of the flat base, a pair of sidewalls attached to the sides of the flat base in perpendicular orientation. The pair of sidewalls extending upward from the sides of the flat base. Preferably, the pair of sidewalls has a tapered height, which is taller at the end of the flat base with the rounded grip and short at the other end, or the open end. Preferably, the height of the pair of sidewalls is level to that of the rounded grip near that end of the flat base.

[0010] A further aspect of the present invention is a handleless food scoop for transporting food objects in a convenient manner. "Handleless" is used herein to refer to a device that lacks a protruding handle used to grip the device. The handleless food scoop comprises a flat base for supporting food objects with a modified end for gripping and a pair of sidewalls attached to the sides of the flat base in perpendicular orientation. The modified end of the flat base is curled up and over itself to form a rounded end ranging in shape from a semi-cylindrical to complete cylindrical. In an alternative embodiment, the end that is curled up and

over itself is welded onto the flat base to form a closed, hollow cylinder. This modified end of the flat base can be used to grip and maneuver the handleless food scoop.

[0011] These aspects and additional aspects of the present invention will be understood by one of ordinary skill upon reviewing the provided disclosure along with the drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0012] Figure 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of the food transporting device.

[0013] Figure 2 is a side view of an embodiment of the food transporting device.

[0014] Figure 3 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the food transporting device.

[0015] Figure 4 is a side view of an alternative embodiment of the food transporting device.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0016] The invention provides a device and method for transporting food objects from place-to-place with limited spillage and provides minimal, direct human contact, which reduces the amount of bacterial and other unwanted contamination. The term "limited spillage" is used to mean generally no spillage of solid food products during transport using the food transporting device provided that the food transporting device is not loaded with food objects beyond its volumetric capacity. The "volumetric capacity" of the food transporting device refers to the volume defined by the pair of side walls and the closed end of the food transporting device, the volume appearing wedge-shaped. The term "open end" is used to mean the end of the flat base that has no physical barrier barring access onto the flat base. The "open end" is also on the opposite side of the flat base from the "closed end." The term "closed end" is used to mean the end of the flat base that is terminated by a rounded extension of the flat base, or an end-section of the flat base that is curved over it.

[0017] An aspect of the present invention is illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2. A food transporting device 1 is shown comprising a flat base 2, a rounded grip 3 terminating one end of the flat base 2, a pair of sidewalls 4a and 4b attached to the sides of the flat base 2 in perpendicular orientation. The rounded grip 3 is preferably an integral extension of the flat base 2 that is curved over itself to form a somewhat cylindrical shape. This arrangement creates a

holding volume for containment of food objects for transport with limited spillage. Spillage of food is limited because of the physical barrier on three sides surrounding the flat base 2, which are the two sidewalls 4a and 4b and the rounded grip 3. A user is able to scoop up food objects by directing the food transporting device 1, open end first, towards and past the food objects. Once transported to the desired area, the food objects are dispensed by tipping the food transporting device 1 so that the open end is lowered. This mode of operation enables a user to limit direct physical contact with the food objects, which reduces the risk bacterial contamination, either from the food objects to the user or vice-a-versa. The loading and dispensing of food objects can be sped up through the use of the user's hand to assist food object onto and off the flat base; however, to avoid contamination, it is preferable to limit actual, direct contact.

[0018] An alternative embodiment of the present invention is shown in Figs. 3 and 4. A food transporting device 10 is shown comprising a flat base 11, a rounded grip 12 terminating one end of the flat base 11, a pair of sidewalls 13a and 13b attached to the sides of the flat base 11 in perpendicular orientation. The rounded grip 12 is preferably an integral extension of the flat base 11 that is curved over to form a curved end to the flat base 11. This arrangement creates a holding volume for containment of food objects for transport with limited spillage. Spillage of food is limited because of the physical barrier on three sides surrounding the flat base 11, which are the two sidewalls 13a and 13b and the rounded grip 12.

[0019] The disclosed food transporting devices can be fabricated from a variety of materials that are general used to form kitchen utensils. Some nonlimiting examples of material that can be used include aluminum, steel, stainless steel, other metal alloys, plastic, and other durable, synthetic polymers. Preferably, the material is nontoxic, durable, inexpensive and can be easily manipulated to the desired shape. More preferably, the material used to fabricate the disclosed food transporting device is made from either stainless steel or plastic.